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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to present to the Commission on the Status of Women the annexed report, prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/16.

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Annex

REPORT PREPARED BY THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITRIAN AFFAIRS

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1992/16, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session, using all available sources, a report on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the refugee camps.

2. Reports on the subject have been submitted regularly to the Commission. The last (E/CN.6/1990/10) was submitted to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session and was based on the findings of a mission of experts sent by the Secretary-General to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children. That report examined the extent to which effect had been given to the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in preceding reports. When, however, plans were accordingly made to send a consultant to the occupied territories, in accordance with Council resolution 1991/19, the Government of Israel, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna, replied on 20 August 1991 as follows:

> "The Permanent Representative of Israel refers to his note dated 13 November 1990 and would like again to emphasize the fact that the above-mentioned resolution contains already conclusions concerning the situation in the territories, which makes - in the opinion of Israel - an additional investigation completely unnecessary." (See E/CN.6/1992/6, para. 3.)

3. The Secretary-General, in his note to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session, stated that, in the absence of an appropriate means of acquiring the information required by Council resolution 1991/19 of 30 May 1991, he was not in a position to provide a report (E/CN.6/1992/6, para. 4).

4. Given the impossibility of visiting the occupied territory, the Council had given the Secretary-General the mandate to use all available sources in compiling this report on the Palestinian women and children in the occupied territory and in the refugee camps. The present report is therefore based on the findings of various documents published by the United Nations, as well as a number of publications from other sources. In it, the present situation of women in the critical areas of family life, economy and employment, education and health, with special attention to psychological well-being, is described. Political matters, as such, do not fall within the competence of the report. It is recognized, however, that the lives of Palestinian women in the occupied territory are profoundly affected by the complex political situation in the region. It is further recognized that all women are affected by the political consequences of the occupation.

I. SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

5. It should be noted that the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory remains characterized by the state of military occupation, which has lasted now for twenty-six years. The tense situation, which has been heightened by the popular uprising (intifadah), now in its sixth year, has been further aggravated as a consequence of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territory and the massive and rapid extension of these settlements.

6. The lack of coordination between positive developments at the diplomatic level and the rigid pattern of Israeli occupation policies, which affect the daily life of Palestinians living in the occupied territory, has further contributed to heightening the tension. 1/

7. According to the information available, in the period between 9 December 1987 (commonly accepted as the day of the outbreak of the intifadah) and 30 September 1992, 75,225 Palestinians had been injured. A total of 17,080 of those injured - representing 22.7 per cent of the total - were women. Nearly all those injuries were caused by bullet wounds, beatings or the effects of tear-gas inhalation. Out of the 1,131 Palestinians killed during the same period in incidents involving the Israeli security forces, 82 were women (55 in the West Bank and 27 in Gaza), which represents 7.2 per cent of the total casualties.*

8. Along with the Palestinian men, many women were administratively detained without being charged during the intifadah, while many others were subjected to torture and various forms of harassment while in prison. Incidents have also been recorded of pregnant women being denied medical care. 2/

9. The imprisonment of women is generally considered unacceptable in the traditional societies of the region. Moreover, in traditional Palestinian society, women remain totally responsible for the care of children, as well as for the private sphere of the home. The imprisonment of women is therefore more distressful to the family than the imprisonment of its male members.

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*The figures for fatalities do not include killings of alleged collaborators (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), October 1992).

10. The situation of Palestinian children in the occupied territory has deteriorated considerably in recent years. According to the data available from the beginning of the intifadah to the end of September 1992, a total of 26,527 children under the age of 15 - representing 35.2 per cent of the total injuried - were injured in clashes involving the Israeli security forces. A total of 180 children under the age of 15 - representing nearly 16 per cent of the total - were among those killed in clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.* According to several reports, detainees, including women and minors, have continued to be subjected to various forms of ill-treatment, both physical and psychological. 3/

11. Moreover, children in the occupied territory are exposed to severe psychological stress: they live under the constant threat of violence, are often separated from one of their parents because that parent has been deported or imprisoned, they may be witnesses to the forced deportation of parents and relatives, as well as to the beating and arrest of family members, and they suffer from the prolonged curfews and closure of their schools.

12. The exercise of family rights and customs has also been impeded by family reunification laws that have led to the deportation of husband or wife and children and denial of their right to return on a permanent basis, and in some cases, denial of registration for the children. Although the family reunification laws do not discriminate against women per se, they are detrimental to family life, and particularly to the lives of the children of marriages affected by these laws, who are denied registration in the occupied territory.

13. An analysis of population data over a number of years shows that the male-to-female ratio has been increasing since the occupation, particularly in recent years. The number of males for every 1,000 females increased from 985 in 1967 to 1,014 in 1989. This increase is mainly due to the growth in the male population group between 25 and 34 years of age, which rose from 9.7 per cent of the population in 1967 to over 15 per cent in 1989. 4/ A plausible explanation could be an increase in the return migration of adult male Palestinians to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from the other countries in the region.

14. In recent years there has been a further deterioration of the economy of the occupied territory. The continuing state of military occupation makes it impossible for an economy to function in a healthy manner. 5/ The economy of the occupied territory remains precarious and overdependent on that of Israel. The security measures, including frequent curfews, travel restrictions and other constraints imposed by the occupying authorities as a response to the intifadah have had - and continue to have - serious repercussions for the workers of territories. Unemployment and underemployment in the occupied territory have reached alarming proportions. 6/ Moreover, collective punishment measures such as the uprooting of trees and crops and confiscation of land have significantly contributed to the poor economic performance of the occupied territory. 7/

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*The figures for fatalities do not include killings of alleged collaborators (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), October 1992).

15. In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war the territory was, in addition, deprived of the considerable income that had been hitherto available from remittances sent by Palestinians working in the Persian Gulf States.

16. The above factors have significantly contributed to the decline in the living standards of Palestinian families. The latest data available indicate that the population registered as refugees accounted for approximately one third of the population in the West Bank and two thirds of the population in the Gaza Strip. Out of the registered refugee population, 26.3 per cent lived in camps in the West Bank and 55 per cent lived in camps in Gaza. 8/ The spread of poverty has had - and continues to have - serious repercussions on the Palestinian family (see section II below).

17. In recent years, there has been a parallel growth in the occupied territory, particularly in Gaza, of fundamentalist movements. There is evidence that a relationship exists between poverty and fundamentalism and that, living in an atmosphere of constant violence and economic hardship, the Palestinians have seen fundamentalism as an effective means of recovering their cultural identity - in the narrow sense of the word - and using it to oppose the occupation. In effect, the rise of fundamentalism is a manifestation of the radicalization of the protests of the Palestinians against 25 years of occupation. It is beyond dispute that the tight security measures taken by the occupying power as a response to the intifadah have contributed to both the spread of poverty and the restriction of movement among the Palestinians. Specific measures, such as the prolonged closure of institutions of higher learning, have directly led to a substantial restriction of the opportunities for women as well as curtailment of their movements, which have contributed to the spread of fundamentalism, manifested by the enhancement of the family's control over its female members.

18. There are, however, indications that the effects of fundamentalist movements on women has stabilized in the past year, owing to a number of interrelated socio-economic factors. First, the traditional paternalistic image of the family began to be eroded as its adult male members were subject to beatings and abuse by the occupation authorities, often in front of the entire family. Secondly, an alarmingly high rate of unemployment among the traditional male breadwinners compelled the family to accept women as wage-earners, particularly in the informal sector, in small-scale domestic enterprises. The reliance of the family on women's earnings has enabled these women to gain a certain degree of self-reliance and has led to an enhancement of their freedom of movement. These factors have helped to mitigate the effects of the spread of fundamentalist ideologies on women's lives. Moreover, the reopening of the educational institutions has also contributed to the breaking down of traditional constraints on women's mobility.

19. As things are, Palestinian women in the occupied territory are experiencing considerable hardship in all spheres of life - family, education, health, economy and employment. Out of their efforts to cope with the situation a new role for women has emerged. The increased participation of women, particularly in the economic sphere, has led to profound changes in the nature of their role in society. Their society's perception of the role of women is itself in the throes of change. Only time can tell, however, how many of these changes will be permanent.

II. GENDER RELATIONS IN THE PALESTINIAN FAMILY

20. The lack of an internationally recognized central authority in the occupied territory leaves the family to bear the main responsibility of protection and support of its individual members. As a basic unit of society, Palestinian families in the occupied territories are profoundly influenced by the economic, political and social changes that affect their society. These transformations of the socio-economic fabric in turn influence the ability of the Palestinian family to provide support to its members.

21. The Palestinian family was traditionally hierarchical, with the father as the head figure and sole decision-maker. Women tended to occupy a relatively lower place in the hierarchy, their contribution to the family stemming mainly from their reproductive capacity.

22. With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, major changes started to take place in the patterns of social relations inside the Palestinian family. There was a shift in the society's sense of commitment from the needs of the family to the cause of the nation, which led to the development of a new and more democratic environment in the family. Moreover, with their loss of control over their land and water resources and marginalization of their economy, the Palestinians developed a strong commitment to education as the only means of ensuring a certain degree of economic security and began to encourage their daughters as well as their sons to pursue higher education. Education, discussed in more detail in the sections below, has been a significant force in the liberation of women from certain traditional constraints on mobility and segregation between the sexes.

23. Women have played a major role in the popular uprising of the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. In their role as the conservators of national heritage and culture, women have helped to create the necessary social preconditions for the intifadah by instilling in their children respect for their culture and knowledge of their history. The widespread participation of women in the intifadah side by side with men has resulted in their assumption of new public roles and responsibilities. In addition to their roles as mothers, wives and daughters, women have become heads of households, main income-earners and teachers, as well as social and political activists.

24. According to the data available, among the registered refugee population in 1992, 30.6 per cent of the families in the West Bank and 20.1 per cent of the families in Gaza were headed by a woman. Moreover, in 22 per cent of the families that qualify for the "special hardship" programme in the occupied territory, the head of the household is a woman, usually a widow or divorcee with dependent children. 9/ These estimates are relatively high for a region where, according to official census figures, about 16-19 per cent of the households are headed by a woman. 10/

25. In both the region in general and in the occupied territory in particular, however, estimates of households headed by females are, in practice, much higher, for cultural reasons and because of the gap between the actual and legal definitions of the "headship" of the household. Moreover, in Middle Eastern societies, many women deliberately conceal the fact that they are the head of the household in an attempt to protect themselves from the law and the customary practices of society.

26. In the occupied territory, in the majority of the other families where the registered head is a male, the burden of ensuring survival in practice

falls on a woman, particularly where the head of the household is imprisoned (8.4 per cent of the "special hardship" cases) or suffers from a disabling injury or illness (29 per cent of the cases). 11/

27. It has been noted that, after the first six months of the intifadah, which were characterized by spontaneous popular uprisings, often involving the participation of entire camps, villages or towns, the direct participation rate of women began to decline. Studies on segments of the Palestinian population by sex and age indicate, however, that the direct participation rate could be a function of age, social background or geographical location. The responsiveness of men over the age of 40 to direct participation in the intifadah, for example, was found in a study to be less than that of females, who are mostly students below the age of 18. 12/

28. Nevertheless, in recent years changes have occurred in the socio-economic structure that have influenced gender relations within the Palestinian family. With the spread of poverty, the household size has increased as deteriorating economic performance has compelled young couples to move in with their extended families in an attempt to save money. Simultaneously, the prolonged closure of educational institutions, particularly those of higher education, has considerably curtailed the movement of women. Moreover, the presence of men and children inside the house for longer periods owing to travel restrictions and frequent curfews has increased the amount of housework women are expected to perform. As a result, the family as a unit has begun to increase its authority over its members, especially its female members.

29. In recent years, women have begun to marry at an earlier age. The high fertility rate, particularly among young women, is a reflection of the general perception that having more Palestinian children would ensure the continuity of the nation. The tendency of young women to marry early, however, and to have more children does not seem merely to be a cultural choice of the Palestinians. Poverty correlates with lower levels of education and a higher rate of childbirth. The measures taken by the Israeli authorities as a response to the intifadah have contributed significantly to the spread of poverty. Living in an atmosphere characterized by violence, always fiercely protective of their women's honour, the members of the family see marriage as the only "safe" option for their young women.

30. It is too early to say whether early marriages are the norm in Palestinian families in the occupied territory, or whether they have been encouraged by the family, because of the prolonged closure of schools and universities in an atmosphere of continued violence, as an interim, "safe" option for young women. But the recent trend of early marriages and high fertility, if continued as an established pattern, is bound to have serious implications for the women's movement by imposing considerable restrictions on educational opportunities, especially the attainment of higher education, and on the mobility of women. There are indications, however, that the reopening of all educational institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, could lead to an improvement in the situation of women (see section IV below).

31. Moreover, economic necessity has increased the extended family's dependence on women for financial support, since it is not possible to rely solely on the traditional male breadwinner, who is often unemployed, has been imprisoned or, in some cases, deported, or is suffering from a disabling injury or illness. Traditional family-based income, mostly controlled by women, has become an indispensable source of income for the Palestinian family. Home-based

economies, such as the cultivation of vegetable gardens and cottage industries, have also been encouraged in Palestinian society as part of the attempt to boycott goods from Israel.

32. On the subject of family reunification, a particularly acute problem has arisen in recent years in cases of marriages entered into by male residents of the West Bank with women, mainly from Jordan, who had applied for residence and were permitted to live in the West Bank only on short-term renewable visitors' permits. Under a new military order introduced in 1987, if the father is a legal resident but not the mother, then a child of the union, born in the West Bank, cannot be registered as a resident and is denied the right to remain as a permanent resident of the West Bank. The wives and children of these marriages have little scope for legal recourse. The enforced deportations by the Israeli military authorities of those women and their children - in 1989 totalling approximately 200 people, mainly women and children - created a climate of considerable stress and uncertainty for their families. 13/

33. Although the Israeli military orders that govern family reunification do not formally discriminate against women, they nevertheless have a serious detrimental effect on family life and have put the women of these marriages under considerable psychological pressure. In the traditional Palestinian society, the wife, on marriage, is expected to move to her husband's residence, but the new order has, in effect, deprived these women of a minimum stability in which they could live out their marriages and raise their children. Israeli authorities continue their policy of deportation 14/ in contravention of article 49 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. 15/

34. Almost all Palestinian families have been affected directly by measures taken by the Israeli authorities in response to the popular uprising. Apart from physical suffering, Palestinian families in the occupied territory have undergone considerable psychological stress, particularly during the last five years (see section V below). The long-term psychological impact of the continuous exposure of children to violence cannot be predicted with certainty. It is certain, however, that this lack of a normal childhood will influence them for the rest of their lives. During the prolonged closure of schools and curfews, which lasted several days in a row, the children expressed their fear and aggression inside the house. While both male and female members of the family suffered, the women were subjected to much greater stress. They not only had to assume additional domestic and economic responsibilities to ensure a minimum level of subsistence for their families but also had to educate their children in an attempt to compensate for the closed classrooms and at the same time take care of family members who had been injured.

III. ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

35. The latest data show that, in 1989, women accounted for 49.7 per cent of the Palestinian population in the occupied territory. 16/

36. Participation by females in the labour force has been low compared with male participation, particularly in the Gaza Strip. An analysis of employment data over a number of years indicates, however, that the Israeli occupation has had a negative effect on the participation rate of women in the labour force. In the West Bank, the rate fell from its peak of 14.3 per cent in 1974 to 12 per cent in 1987, to approximately 10 per cent in 1990. Figures for the

Gaza Strip reveal a steady decline in the female participation rate, from 6.4 per cent in 1968, to 4.6 per cent in 1974, to 4.2 per cent in 1987, declining to less than 2 per cent in 1990. The male participation rate was over 90 per cent in 1990. 17/

37. The Israeli occupation and the resultant economic decline had a particularly detrimental effect on female participation in the labour force in the industrial sector. After the Israeli occupation, the percentage of female workers in industry declined sharply, from 24.8 per cent of the West Bank residents employed in industry in 1970 to 11 per cent in 1980 and from 8.9 per cent in 1987 to 6.2 per cent in 1990. Similarly, in Gaza, the female labour force in industry declined from 17.4 per cent of all residents of the Gaza Strip employed in industry in 1970 to 8.9 per cent in 1980 and from 2.7 per cent in 1987 to almost nothing in 1990. The industrial sector, albeit small, is currently almost totally dominated by a male labour force. 18/

38. Although there is a cultural factor behind the low participation by females in the labour force, particularly in the Gaza Strip, it is not in itself a sufficient explanation. Deteriorating economic conditions and demographic factors have also contributed to the relatively low female participation rate in the occupied territory. In conditions of rising unemployment (currently estimated at 40 per cent of the registered workforce in the Gaza Strip, for example), women find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position where employment is concerned. Either they lose their jobs because they have been employed in enterprises that cannot survive the loss of purchasing power in the community, or they are put under pressure to make way for male job-seekers. Particularly during the past five years, a large number of males have lost their jobs in Israel as a result of the additional security measures taken by the Israeli authorities. These males have usually sought employment in the occupied territories, reducing the opportunities open to female labour.

39. There are indications that the traditionally weak integration of women into the productive sectors of the economy, particularly in the industrial sector, is in the process of change. As discussed in section IV below, there is a growing trend for women to enrol in industry-related vocational training programmes, including courses in commerce, computer science and electronics. These women, upon graduation, will have an important role to play in meeting future labour demands in the productive sectors of an independent Palestinian economy. It should also be recognized, however, that overall female enrolment in vocational training and the enrolment of women in university technical courses, such as engineering and management, remain relatively low.

40. The integration of women, particularly among the poor and refugee population, may largely be shaped by the economic changes that have evolved as a result of the intifadah. As the domestic economies of the occupied territory have declined to a subsistence level, alternative economic activities have been created (for example home production, sharing and unofficial markets), in which women play a key role.

41. As employees of small firms and subcontracted industries inside the occupied territories, women are, at present, more exposed to the production and marketing process: they are learning how to adapt their products to local markets and are learning new skills in industries in which they have traditionally been employed, such as animal husbandry and horticulture. Through their involvement in the domestic small-scale industries, women are, in fact,

restructuring the domestic production base and helping to build self-reliance in their domestic economy. These income-generating women's projects have particularly benefited from the popular boycotts of Israeli goods and the corresponding rise in demand for locally manufactured products.

42. The availability of credit facilities, albeit limited, from several international sources, has also helped the small-scale industries that are run by women. The Palestine Women's Initiative Fund of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which began its operations in 1992, finances group schemes, including a pilot business centre in Nablus to serve as a marketing and distribution centre for women's enterprises in the area; a cooperative in Aqabat Jabr, in the training phase where women are being taught business skills to enable them to select and set up an enterprise with potentially good economic viability; workshops at three centres in Gaza for household maintenance; and a library run by the women of Khan Yunis for their community. 19/ Women are also eligible for loans under the income-generation programme, under the auspices of UNRWA.

43. Women's participation in the generation of alternative sources of income, albeit at a subsistence level, has enabled them to gain a certain degree of self-reliance. As mentioned above (see section I) the reliance of the extended family on women's earnings during this time of economic hardship has resulted in a greater degree of freedom of movement for women than would have otherwise been possible in the presence of fundamentalism.

44. The women's commitment to enhancing their living standards is evidenced by the sharp increase in women's programmes in the occupied territory and refugee camps over the years (see table), where refugee camps in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic account for the majority of the participants and most of the centres. The West Bank and Gaza area accounted for 25 centres out of the Agency-wide figure of 65, and 2,494 participants out of the Agency-wide total of 9,143. In order to transform these initial and relatively modest efforts of women to generate alternate sources of income into sustainable businesses, however, intensive training in management and marketing is needed, as well as further training of the workers in technical skills. 20/

Participation in UNRWA women's programmes, 1967-1992 a/

Participation	1967	1975	1985	1988	1990	1991	1992
Number of centres	49	47	47	47	49	58	65
Number of participants	2 057	1 345	1 450	1 516	3 526	5 818	9 143

Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1992.

a/ Agency-wide.

45. Many Palestinian initiatives could not, however, achieve their aims, owing to the administrative obstacles placed in their way by the Israeli

authorities. 21/ In addition to Israeli Government control over land and water, Israeli policies include restrictions on trade and the protection of Israeli industries, licensing and institutionalized credit.

IV. EDUCATION

46. As noted earlier, since the occupation in 1967, Palestinians have regarded education as their only means of obtaining a certain measure of income security. Because of the correlation of education with better employment opportunities and higher living standards, Palestinians have traditionally encouraged their children to pursue higher education and training. Education has contributed significantly to liberating women from traditional constraints on mobility and segregation of the sexes.

47. The majority (60 per cent) of the schools in the occupied territory are managed by the Israeli authorities. Palestinian children also receive formal education through institutions managed by UNRWA and private organizations. 22/ These institutions include kindergarten schools, elementary schools, preparatory schools and post-primary schools.

48. Over the period in question, schools have been closed for long periods, especially in the West Bank, by order of the Israeli military authorities. While no general closure order has been issued in Gaza, pupils have still, on average, lost approximately one third of their school days because of curfews, military closures, general strikes and disturbances.

49. This serious disruption of education has left considerable gaps in the knowledge of pupils at all levels, regardless of age and sex. An analysis of achievement tests administered by UNRWA staff to assess the effect of the interruption of education and school closure on pupils in the school year 1991/92 revealed that all students, but particularly those in the lower grades, were affected detrimentally. 23/

50. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of female pupils at all levels of education. These figures, however, must be compared with regional data in order to assess accurately the situation of women's education in the occupied territory. In 1992, female pupils represented 49 per cent of the total pupils enrolled in all first-level educational institutions, covering the age range 6-14 years. 24/

51. In 1989, the percentage of females in total secondary enrolment in the West Bank (44 per cent) was higher than that of the Arab region as a whole (41 per cent). In Qatar, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, women accounted for half of the total secondary school enrolment. 25/ Taking into account the disruption of the educational system caused by the intifadah and the response thereto of the Israeli authorities, it seems logical to infer that the female enrolment figures would probably be higher were the general conditions in the occupied territory more conducive to the functioning of a healthy education system.

52. The disruption of education, especially at the higher levels, regardless of gender, is reflected in official statistics. According to the Israeli Statistical Abstract, 1991, in 1986, the year before the intifadah, 6.4 per cent of the women (16.3 per cent of the men) in Gaza and 7.1 per cent of the women (14.2 per cent of the men) in the West Bank had 13 or more years of

schooling. In spite of an annual population growth rate of more than 3 per cent, the enrolment numbers had fallen by 1989 to 4.9 per cent of the women (12.5 per cent of the men) in Gaza and to 6.2 per cent of the women (12.3 per cent of the men) in the West Bank. 26/

53. All Palestinian universities were closed officially by order of the Israeli authorities from early 1988. The closure of the universities lasted much longer than that of the schools. The six universities in the occupied territory were allowed to open by stages, starting from mid 1990. Bir Zeit University in the West Bank was allowed to reopen after four and a half years of closure, at the end of April 1992. The closure of universities and other educational institutions for that length of time would be contrary to article 26, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)), in which the right of everyone to education is affirmed.

54. The latest figures available (for 1987) indicate that 39 per cent of the students enrolled in the West Bank universities were women. 27/ These figures are roughly equivalent to the average female university enrolment ratio of the Arab countries in the region, although there are many countries whose female university enrolment ratio exceeds 50 per cent: in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, for example, 65 per cent of the students enrolled at universities in 1988 were women. At 50 per cent, the female enrolment rate in Israeli universities remains higher than that of the occupied territory, but low compared with some Arab States in the region. 27/

55. The relatively low level of female enrolment at institutions of higher learning, including universities, in the occupied territory (compared with Israel) is largely due to socio-economic factors, and particularly the extent to which the Governments are willing or able to invest in the human resources of their peoples. In 1987, Israel's total educational expenditure was 9.2 per cent of total government expenditure. Jordan devoted 13 per cent of its total government expenditure to education in 1985. For Kuwait, the proportion of government expenditure on education was 12.1 per cent, and for the Arab region as a whole it was, on average, 6.3 per cent in 1989. 28/

56. Even before the beginning of the intifadah, Palestinian educational institutions were experiencing a number of difficulties. Material deficiencies have always been a great problem. The quality of teaching has seriously suffered owing to overcrowded classes, the decrepit state of the existing buildings, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, and underpayment of teachers.

57. Overcrowding in schools has been identified as a critical problem: in Gaza, 70 per cent and in the West Bank 46 per cent of the classes in schools managed by UNRWA were operated in double shifts in 1991/92. The construction of new schools is said to have been delayed by lengthy administrative procedures on the part of the Israeli authorities. 29/

58. An increasing number of Palestinian women in the occupied territory have enrolled in recent years in departments that were traditionally male-dominated. Data indicates that, in 1989, 31 per cent of the women were enrolled in scientific and technical departments at universities in the occupied territory. In hard-core technical fields such as engineering, however, the percentage of female enrolment was still relatively low, at 20 per cent. Against that, women comprised 48 per cent of the students enrolled in the arts faculties and 40 per cent of those enrolled in education. 30/

59. The enrolment of women in the UNRWA vocational training centres also reflects the trend for women to study traditionally male-dominated subjects: during the academic year 1991/92, 43.5 per cent of the female vocational trainees were studying subjects traditionally reserved for men, including courses in technical and commercial subjects, electronics, computer science and paramedical work. These women, upon completion of their training, would qualify for jobs in architectural draughting and as quantity surveyors, as land surveyors, mechanical engineering technicians and assistant pharmacists. The enrolment of women in mechanical, metal, electrical and building trade-oriented courses, however, was still low, at 13.4 per cent. 31/

60. All institutions of higher learning in the West Bank, including training centres, were closed by military order from early in the intifadah until the spring of 1990. The training centres have continued to be disrupted for the past two years - particularly during the Persian Gulf crisis - by curfews, disturbances and strikes. Training centres in Gaza had lost 20 per cent of teaching days during this period. 19/

61. In a general atmosphere characterized by tension and violence, the prolonged closure of schools has added to the feelings of insecurity and fear, particularly among children. Not having regular schooling, children have had to play in the streets, which has exposed them to considerable violence. In Gaza, schools experienced major disruptions as recently as May 1992 from incursions of Israeli settlers and security forces into school compounds and subsequent curfews. 32/

62. During this period, women have contributed to "underground teaching" and clandestine education. Pupils have studied in mosques and other private locations and have achieved an attendance rate of approximately 95 per cent for both boys and girls. Most of the teaching in private locations was done by women - mothers or volunteer teachers.

V. HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

63. Health conditions have been affected by the five years of continuous tension in the occupied territory, particularly in terms of psychological well-being.

64. The atmosphere of constant mourning has also added to the stresses in the family. Many women have lost children, husbands or other close family members. Some have been detained, while others have forfeited their property. Given the precarious health services in the occupied territory, living with their extended families in overcrowded rooms, women suffer from a general lack of nutrition, health care and proper hygienic standards.

65. Inadequate sanitation, nutrition and water supply, insufficient access to medical facilities and the high cost of medical care provided by the Israeli authorities continue to contribute to poor health conditions in the occupied territory. In the Gaza Strip, for example, although the population has increased by at least 70 per cent since the occupation, the ratio of beds to population had fallen to a level of 1.3 per 1,000 in 1989 from 2.4 per 1,000 before the occupation. 33/

66. In the Gaza Strip, salinization and the depletion of water resources by over-drilling, including drilling done in Israel, have reached a dangerous

level. Salinization is also a growing problem in the West Bank. The latest figures indicate that Palestinians in the West Bank were granted access to an average of 150 cubic metres per person, while Israeli settlers in the West Bank received an average of 2,000 cubic metres per person. 34/

67. Pregnant women and children were badly affected by the prolonged curfew and emergency regulations in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf crisis, when telecommunication lines would often be interrupted or cut and special permits had to be obtained for ambulances during curfews, leading to general delays in transporting patients to hospitals. 35/ The curfews and worsening economic conditions in the occupied territories have led to a substantial fall in income, giving rise to nutritional problems, including iron-deficiency anaemia, which particularly affects women of reproductive age and children under three years old. 36/

68. Fertility-related factors and short intervals between births are the main cause of the remaining infant mortality and maternal ill-health and death. 19/ The population data suggest an average rate of population growth of 3.4 per cent over the period 1988-1990, the highest rates being registered in the Gaza Strip. 37/ The data indicates that the population growth is mainly due to natural increase. The reasons behind the high fertility rate, particularly among younger women, are discussed in section II above.

69. The frustrations, the emotional deprivation and the physical and psychological humiliation, as well as the destruction of the paternal image, have been found to cause severe psychological stress to children and adolescents. 38/ These factors have resulted in a significant increase in psychopathology, such as personality disorders and delinquency, which, in addition to personal psychological disturbances, also have a feedback effect on the entire family, leading to disturbances of relationships within the family. These disturbances place additional stress on the mother, since, traditionally, it is she who is responsible for the household.

70. One form of psychopathology is the increase of physical and verbal forms of violence in young adolescents. This is manifested by the rise in intransigence among children and young adolescents accompanied by symptoms of psychopathology, such as depression, loss of sleep, loss of appetite and loss of concentration. Few children have escaped physical or psychological abuse by Israeli soldiers. Their fear of being abused by Israeli soldiers were reflected in the results of a study conducted in 1990 in the occupied territory, which indicates that nearly half of the Palestinian children sampled were terrified of Israeli soldiers, and more than one fourth said that they were afraid to leave the house. Boys seem to be relatively more prone to aggressive behaviour than girls. 39/

71. The United Nations and international non-governmental organizations are attempting to deal with the issue of mental health care in the occupied territories. A joint WHO/UNRWA Mental Health Programme, for example, was begun in May 1991 in the West Bank. In resolution WHA 45.26, entitled "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine", adopted by the forty-fifth World Health Assembly on 14 May 1992, deep concern was expressed at the Israeli refusal to permit the Special Committee of Experts to visit the occupied territories.

Notes

1/ See the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694), para. 610.

2/ "Workshop I: Development of Palestinian women's movements in Palestine" (NGO/IMQP/VII/16 pp. 2-3), and "Report on Workshop I: Women" (NGO/IMQP/VII/25, p. 3), papers submitted to the Seventh United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 29 to 31 August 1990.

3/ United Nations Secretariat, Division for Palestinian Rights, Bulletin, vol. XIV, No. 10/11 (October/November 1991), p. 12.

4/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 1991), table 27.2.

5/ See Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories (United Nations, Department of Public Information, 1988), pp. 3 and 13.

6/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices (vol. 2), International Labour Conference, 79th session, Geneva, 1992, pp. 8 and 20.

7/ Question of Palestine, 1979-1990 (United Nations Secretariat, July 1991), p. 37.

8/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, June 1992.

9/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, "Statistics of Palestinian refugees" (WWR761/A), October 1992.

10/ Homa Hoodfar, "Legal barriers to the empowerment of female-headed households: women and custody in the Middle East" (EGM/VW/1990/WP.6), paper submitted to the Expert Group Meeting on Vulnerable Women, held at Vienna from 26 to 30 November 1990.

11/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, October 1992.

12/ Islah Jad, "Patterns of relations within the Palestinian family after the intifadah", in Gender in the Intifada, mimeographed version, 1991.

13/ "Workshop II: Human rights in the occupied territories: the reunification of Palestinian families" (IMQP/NGO/VIII/11), pp. 4-5, paper submitted to the Eighth United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at the Austria Center, Vienna, from 28 to 30 August 1991.

14/ United States of America, Department of State, "Country report on human rights practices for 1991", submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1992) p. 1443.

15/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973.

16/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1991), table 27.3.

17/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices (vol. 2), International Labour Conference, 79th session, Geneva, 1992, p. 14; Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1988, No. 39 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1988), table XXVII/25; and Palestinian Liberation Organization, Palestinian Statistical Abstract, 1980 (Damascus, Palestine National Fund, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1980).

18/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 1991), table 27.20; Palestine National Fund, Industrial Statistical Bulletin for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1988 (Damascus, Central Bureau of Statistics, Economic Department, 1988), pp. 22-23; and "Palestine industrial sector: structure, institutional framework and future requirements", conference room paper prepared by Sara M. Roy, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) consultant for the UNIDO Seminar on Prospects for the Palestinian Industrial Sector, held at Vienna from 11 to 13 October 1989, pp. 114-115.

19/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, July 1992.

20/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Department of Relief and Social Services, "Palestinian Women's Initiative Fund: progress report on projects funded by the Canadian Development Agency", 30 June 1992; and Amal Abu Daqqa and others, "Evaluation of women's income-generating projects in the Gaza Strip", sponsored by Save the Children and Shu'un il Ma'ra, Gaza, July 1992.

21/ "Assistance to the Palestinian people: recent economic developments in the occupied Palestinian territory", report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development secretariat to the Trade and Development Board at its thirty-eighth session (TD/B/1305).

22/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1991), tables 24.47 and 24.48.

23/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), chap. VI, sect. A, para. 70.

24/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Statistical Yearbook, 1991 (Paris, 1991), table 3.4; and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Department of Education, July 1992.

25/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Statistical Yearbook, 1991 (Paris, 1991), tables 2.4 and 3.7.

26/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1991), table 27.49.

27/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Statistical Yearbook, 1991 (Paris, 1991), table 3.11.

28/ Ibid., table 4.1.

29/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), chap. VI, sect. D, para. 102.

30/ State of Palestine, Department of General and Higher Education, Statistical Education Book (1989-1990) (Amman, 1990), pp. 224-225.

31/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), annex I, table 6.

32/ Ibid., Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), chap. VI, sect. B, para. 81.

33/ Robert Giel and others, "Needs assessment in respect of emergency medical care in UNRWA clinics and non-governmental hospitals of the West Bank and Gaza", World Health Organization short-term consultancy report, 30 April-20 May 1989, chap. 5, para. 5.2.

34/ Life of the Palestinians under Israeli Occupation (United Nations Secretariat, Department of Public Information, July 1992), p. 17.

35/ United States of America, Department of State, "Country report on human rights practices for 1991", submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, and the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 1440; and Robert Giel and others, "Needs assessment in respect of emergency medical care in UNRWA clinics and non-governmental hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza", World Health Organization short-term consultancy report, 30 April-20 May 1989.

36/ Life of the Palestinians under Israeli Occupation (United Nations, Department of Public Information, July 1992), p. 29.

37/ Ibid., p. 23.

38/ Ahmad M. Baker, "The psychological impact of the intifada on Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank and Gaza: an exploratory study", paper presented at the 1990 annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Miami Beach, Florida (American Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc., 1990); and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, "Annual report of the Director of Health, 1991", pp. 67-68.

39/ Ahmad M. Baker, "The psychological impact of the intifada on Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank and Gaza: an exploratory study", paper presented at the 1990 annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Miami Beach, Florida (American Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc., 1990), pp. 4-6.